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## **Family life transitions, residential relocations, and housing in the life course**

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### *Summary*

## **Introduction to the Special Collection on “Separation, Divorce, and Residential Mobility in a Comparative Perspective”**

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This publication is part of the Special Collection on “Separation, Divorce, and Residential Mobility in a Comparative Perspective,” organized by Guest Editors Júlia Mikolai, Hill Kulu, and Clara H. Mulder.

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**Family life transitions, residential relocations, and housing in the life course: Current research and opportunities for future work: Introduction to the Special Collection on “Separation, Divorce, and Residential Mobility in a Comparative Perspective”**

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**Abstract**

**BACKGROUND**

This article provides an introduction to the Special Collection on “Separation, Divorce, and Residential Mobility in a Comparative Perspective.” The Special Collection consists of six European case studies: Belgium, Finland, France, Italy, Hungary, and the United Kingdom, and a cross-national study comparing Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. All studies focus on residential relocations or housing outcomes following separation.

**RESULTS**

Divorce and separation have a long-lasting impact on individuals’ residential relocations and housing conditions. This influence is gendered – women are generally worse off than men – and varies by individuals’ educational level, whether they have children, and who cares for the children following union dissolution.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Although the study countries are different regarding their welfare systems and housing markets, papers in the Special Collection report striking similarities in the housing and residential consequences of union dissolution across countries. Separation leads to a prolonged residential and housing instability for many individuals.

**CONTRIBUTION**

The studies contribute to the literature by focusing on the role of repartnering, child custody arrangements, the parental home, location continuity, country context, and gender for postseparation residential patterns and trajectories. Furthermore, this Special

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Collection contains the first analyses of the residential and housing patterns of separated men and women in Eastern and Southern Europe.

## **1. Introduction**

Individuals' family lives and residential relocations<sup>4</sup> are closely related (Cooke 2008). Residential moves allow individuals to adjust their housing to changes in their family lives such as the start of a coresidential relationship, the birth of a child, and separation or divorce (Wagner and Mulder 2015a). Many studies have analysed the link between partnership or family formation and residential moves and have shown that marriage and childbirth lead to increased levels of residential mobility (Kulu 2008; Kulu and Steele 2013; Michielin and Mulder 2008; Mulder and Wagner 1993). Recent studies have shown that union dissolution also leads to elevated levels of residential moves (Feijten and van Ham 2007, 2010; Mikolai and Kulu 2018a, 2018b).

The aim of this article is to review previous research on the relationship between family changes (union formation, childbirth, and union dissolution) and residential relocations and housing in Europe. Additionally, we provide an overview of the six country case studies (Belgium, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, and the United Kingdom) and the cross-national study comparing Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom included in this Special Collection. To conclude, we summarise the opportunities and challenges of studying the link between family changes and residential relocations.

## **2. Relationship formation, residential relocations, and housing**

Union formation is likely to lead to a residential move for two reasons. First, by definition, at least one of the partners needs to move to start a coresidential relationship. Either one of the partners moves in with the other partner or both of them move to a joint home (Brandén and Haandrikman 2019; Flowerdew and Al-Hamad 2004). Second, union formation leads to the formation of a larger household, which needs more space than the two preunion households. This means that following the formation of a relationship, individuals are likely to move to larger and/or better quality dwellings

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<sup>4</sup> The term 'residential relocations' refers to both residential mobility (short-distance moves) and migration (long-distance moves). In this paper, we use the terms 'residential relocations,' 'residential moves,' and 'moves' interchangeably to refer to residential relocations.

(Clark and Huang 2003; Clark and Davies Withers 2009; Feijten and Mulder 2002; Helderman, Mulder, and van Ham 2004; Kulu 2008; Michielin and Mulder 2008; Mulder and Wagner 1998; Mulder and Lauster 2010; Rabe and Taylor 2010), and, especially in the case of marriage, to homeownership (Bayrakdar et al. 2019; Clark, Deurloo, and Dieleman 1994; Davies Withers 1998; Deurloo, Clark, and Dieleman 1994; Feijten, Mulder, and Baizan 2003; Helderman 2007; Mulder and Manting 1994). These residential and housing changes are partially enabled by financial benefits that stem from coresidence such as a larger household income (assuming that both partners work), pooled resources, increased levels of housing consumption (Helderman 2007), and the benefits of economies of scale (Feijten and Mulder 2005).

The link between partnership formation and residential moves is complex (Wagner and Mulder 2015a). Previous studies have shown that it is crucial to distinguish between ‘event moves’ (e.g., moves related to the event of getting married) and ‘state moves’ (e.g., the status of being married). Indeed, these studies have found that the event of marriage leads to increased levels of residential relocations whereas married individuals have a reduced propensity to experience a residential move (Jang, Casterline, and Snyder 2014; Michielin and Mulder 2008; Mulder and Wagner 1993; Odland and Shumway 1993; Warner and Sharp 2016).

A further complexity is that residential moves or housing changes may take place in anticipation of family events, for example, shortly before marriage (Michielin and Mulder 2008). For example, couples who plan to get married may become homeowners prior to marriage. Homeownership is not only a major form of savings and couples’ largest asset (Mulder 2006b), but it is also an investment, which leads to financial interdependence among partners. This, in turn, may further increase couples’ commitment and the relationship-specific investments they make (e.g., marriage) (Holland 2012). Indeed, research for the United Kingdom has shown that the vast majority of couples who live in an owner-occupied home are joint owners; in only 8% of couples observed in 1992–2012 was only one partner the sole owner of the home (Lersch and Vidal 2016).

With the increase in the prevalence of cohabiting unions (Ermisch and Francesconi 2000) residential moves and housing changes are likely to be increasingly linked to the formation of cohabitation rather than marriage (Flowerdew and Al-Hamad 2004). Some studies have analysed the link between both cohabitation and marriage, and residential relocations or housing changes. For example, Smits and Mulder (2008) found that in the Netherlands both the event of cohabitation and marriage leads to an increased probability of becoming a first-time homeowner. Furthermore, Brandén and Haandrikman (2019) showed that in Sweden women are more likely to move than men at the start of a coresidential relationship. Other studies have analysed the probability of cohabiting individuals to move to homeownership. For example, cohabiting couples’

propensity to become homeowners in West Germany and the Netherlands was similar to that of childless married couples (Mulder and Wagner 1998). In England and Wales cohabiting men and women were found to be less likely to move to homeownership than those who were married; instead they tended to move to dwellings in the private renting sector (Mikolai and Kulu 2018b).

When cohabiting couples marry, they may move to more appropriate or more desirable housing such as a single-family home or homeownership (Feijten and Mulder 2002; Michielin and Mulder 2008). This is because marriage is a sign of a serious commitment and the decision to marry may also be related to couples' intention to have children (Manting 1994). However, it is also possible that cohabiting couples who want to buy a house jointly will marry first, as marriage may create financial benefits and easier access to a mortgage (Angelini, Laferrère, and Weber 2013; Feijten and Mulder 2005). Indeed, previous studies across Europe and the United States show that married couples are the most likely to experience the transition to homeownership (Holland 2012; Lauster and Fransson 2006; Mulder and Wagner 1998). Additionally, Holland (2012) found that couples are particularly likely to marry soon after or soon before purchasing a joint home in Sweden.

## **2.1 Fertility, residential relocations, and housing**

Another family life transition that is linked to individuals' residential relocations and housing experiences is the birth of a first child and/or subsequent children. Generally, an increase in household size is associated with reduced rates of residential moves (Sandefur and Scott 1981; White, Moreno, and Guo 1995) because moving is more costly for large families and families with children tend to have strong location-specific ties, which parents may be reluctant to sever in the interest of children's well-being. At the same time, the transition to parenthood or the birth of additional children leads to a need for larger space, and a desire to live in a dwelling that is appropriate for a family (Kulu and Vikat 2007; Michielin and Mulder 2008; Mulder and Wagner 1998; Mulder 2006a; Ström 2010). Thus, the birth of a child or subsequent children is likely to be associated with an increased propensity to move over short distance and to move to homeownership, and/or to family-friendly dwellings and neighbourhoods.

Previous studies have found that childbearing is associated with increased levels of residential moves (Clark, Deurloo, and Dieleman 1984; Courgeau 1985) and a higher propensity of moving to homeownership (Bayrakdar et al. 2019; Davies Withers 1998; Deurloo, Clark, and Dieleman 1994; Enström Öst 2012; Mulder and Wagner 1998), to single-family homes (Feijten and Mulder 2002; Kulu and Vikat 2007), and to rural areas (Courgeau 1989; Lindgren 2003). Additionally, many couples move in

anticipation of childbearing (Clark and Davies Withers 2009). For example, a first conception was associated with an increased propensity of moving to rural and small-urban areas and of moving within the same settlement in Austria (Kulu 2008). However, second and third births led to a smaller probability of moving in general and of moving to urban areas (except when couples lived in large cities). Additionally, Kulu and Steele (2013) showed that many conceptions occurred shortly after moving to a new house and many housing-related moves happened during pregnancy in Finland. Vidal, Huinink, and Feldhaus (2017) focused on the link between fertility intentions and residential relocations and found that young, childless couples who intended to have a child were less likely to move and older couples who were already parents and intended to have another child had higher mobility rates. Li (2019) also focused on the link between fertility intentions and the residential relocation of partnered women and found that couples who intended to have a child tended to move from one owner-occupied dwelling to another, larger owner-occupied dwelling in Australia. However, the author has also shown that local housing market conditions can influence this relationship; fertility intentions only translate into residential relocations in relatively affordable housing markets. These findings are in line with the idea that couples move either in response to or in anticipation of childbearing.

Studies show that couples may move first and only then have children. Mulder and Wagner (2001) showed that in West Germany and the Netherlands first birth risks were high during the first year following a move to homeownership. Michielin and Mulder (2008) found higher levels of fertility following short-distance moves in the Netherlands. Additionally, couples who moved together (especially those who moved to a detached house) had increased fertility levels in Finland (Kulu and Vikat 2007). Likewise, Ström (2010) found for Sweden that dwelling size (rather than housing tenure or dwelling type) was the most important factor associated with increased first birth rates. Ermisch and Steele (2016) explicitly studied the role of fertility expectations in couples' residential relocations and found empirical support for the argument that selective moves explain increased birth risks. This implies that couples tend to move to adjust their housing in anticipation of childbirth. An alternative mechanism could be that couples postpone childbearing until after they have moved to their ideal home (Mulder 2006a). This suggests that childbearing plans and behaviour will not only influence individuals' housing choices, but housing availability (or affordability) may also shape their fertility patterns (Kulu 2013).



## **2.2 Union dissolution, residential relocations, and housing**

The dissolution of a coresidential relationship (marriage or cohabitation) is also associated with residential moves and changes in housing needs and circumstances. Divorce and separation are undesirable life events, which have negative consequences for individuals' economic, emotional, and physical well-being, as well as their housing situation (Amato 2000, 2010; Poortman 2000). Although divorce and separation from cohabiting relationships has been increasing, until recently few studies have focused on the interrelationship between union dissolution, residential moves, and housing.

Previous studies that have analysed the relationship between union dissolution and residential moves can be divided into two groups. First, some studies have analysed the effect of residential moves on the propensity of union dissolution. Residential relocations may influence the propensity of union dissolution for several reasons (Boyle et al. 2008). Moving is stressful and long-distance moves often only benefit one of the partners (usually the man). Additionally, women who move long distances with their partner tend to have lower earnings, are less likely to be employed, and work fewer hours than women who do not experience such a move. These arguments imply that moving leads to an increased risk of union dissolution. The few studies that are available on this topic have shown that in Austria cohabiting and married couples who move at least twice (both short- or long-distance moves) are more likely to experience union dissolution compared to those who do not move (Boyle et al. 2008).

Factors related to the residential context may also influence whether a couple separates. Some recent studies analysed the role of housing characteristics for union stability. Krapf and Wagner (2020) showed for Germany that housing affordability was negatively associated with the risk of union dissolution whereas homeowners had more stable partner relationships than tenants regardless of whether the home was owned jointly between the partners or not. Similarly, Coulter and Thomas (2019) found that the risk of partnership dissolution was higher among renters than among homeowners in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, payment arrears and greater female control over housing (i.e., when only the woman is named in the tenancy or mortgage contract) were associated with elevated separation risks. Lauster (2008) analysed the link between the characteristics of the Swedish housing market and couple stability. He showed that greater housing affordability was associated with greater union stability whereas the availability of detached housing was linked to weaker couple stability.

Second, studies have analysed the influence of union dissolution on residential relocations. Union dissolution leads to a smaller household income and a loss of economies of scale (Feijten and van Ham 2007, 2010). Additionally, upon union dissolution at least one of the ex-partners need to move out of the joint home by definition in order for the couple to be able to separate (Feijten and van Ham 2007, 2010; Mulder and Wagner 2010; Speare and Goldscheider 1987). Therefore, union

dissolution is expected to negatively influence separated individuals' residential and housing outcomes (Feijten and Mulder 2010). Indeed, previous studies have found that separation is associated with elevated levels of residential relocations; separated people are more likely to experience a residential move than those who are single or are in a coresidential partnership (Feijten and van Ham 2007, 2010; Mikolai and Kulu 2018a, 2018b). Furthermore, shortly after separation individuals' housing situation may be temporary and it may take several adjustment moves before separated individuals are able to move into a dwelling that is appropriate for their new circumstances (Dieleman and Schouw 1989; Feijten and van Ham 2007; Warner and Sharp 2016). Additionally, even if one of the ex-partners stays in the joint home after separation, they may have to move out later if they are unable to maintain the home alone (Feijten and Mulder 2010). Indeed, previous studies have shown that although residential relocation levels decrease over time since separation (Feijten and van Ham 2010), they remain elevated even one (Kulu et al. 2020) and three or more years following separation (Mikolai and Kulu 2018b).

Many studies have analysed who moves out of the joint home following separation and the distance of moves among movers. These studies found that women, those who initiated the separation, those with higher relative income, and those who were already in a new partnership at the time of separation were more likely to move out of the joint home than their ex-partners (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielsen 2008; Mulder and Wagner 2010; Mulder et al. 2012). At the same time, ex-partners who have custody of children (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielsen 2008; Mulder and Wagner 2010; Thomas, Mulder, and Cooke 2017), who are older (Mulder and Wagner 2010; Mulder et al. 2012), and whose family members live nearby (Mulder and Malmberg 2011; Mulder and Wagner 2012) are less likely to move out. Regarding the distance of moves, separation is primarily related to short-distance moves (Feijten and van Ham 2007; Mulder and Wagner 1993). Further, postseparation mobility is spatially constrained; separated people move more frequently but over shorter distances than those in intact couple relationships (Feijten and van Ham 2007; Thomas, Mulder, and Cooke 2017; Thomas, Mulder, and Cooke 2018). Additionally, recent studies highlighted that postseparation moving is related to proximity to the ex-partner. For example, Cooke, Mulder, and Thomas (2016) showed for the United States that separated parents are less likely to migrate than childless ex-partners, suggesting that postseparation migration decisions of former partners remain linked through their children. Similarly, Thomas, Mulder, and Cooke (2017) showed for the United Kingdom that when both parents were involved in childcare prior to separation, they maintain closer proximity to each other following separation than when only one parent was involved in childcare.

Previous studies also investigated where people move to following separation in terms of the tenure type of the dwelling. These studies have primarily focused on

moving out of homeownership and showed that divorce or separation is associated with an increased likelihood of moving out of homeownership (Ermisch and Di Salvo 1996; Feijten 2005; Feijten and Mulder 2010; Feijten and van Ham 2010; Lersch and Vidal 2014) and a reduced propensity of entering homeownership (Feijten and van Ham 2010; Lersch and Vidal 2014; Thomas and Mulder 2016). Instead of focusing on moving out of homeownership, a recent study also included individuals who lived in privately and socially rented dwellings at the time of separation in England and Wales (Mikolai and Kulu 2018b) and found that separated individuals tend to move to private renting. Separated women were also likely to move to socially rented dwellings and separated men to homeownership.

Some studies focused specifically on moving to the parental home after separation. Albertini, Gähler, and Härkönen (2018) studied this phenomenon in Sweden and found that although coresidence with parents is not common in Sweden, its likelihood increases considerably following union dissolution, especially among men, those with low income, and those who live closer to their parents. Stone, Berrington, and Falkingham (2014) found that separated individuals were more likely to return to the parental home than those who were in a relationship in Britain. Being a parent reduced women's probability of moving back to the parental home whereas for men being a separated parent was associated with an increased probability of returning to the parental home. Das, de Valk, and Merz (2017) analysed separated mothers' propensities to move in with their own mothers following separation in the Netherlands and found that separated mothers were more likely to move to their mothers' municipality than nonseparated mothers. Some mothers also used the parental home as a steppingstone before cohabiting with a new partner. The propensity to return to the parental home following union dissolution varies across countries with different welfare contexts (Arundel and Lennartz 2017); it is higher in more familialistic countries (Southern Europe and New EU Member States) and lower in countries where there is more institutional support and autonomy (Social Democratic and Conservative regimes).

### **3. Summary of papers in this Special Collection**

This Special Collection consists of six European country case studies (Belgium, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, and the United Kingdom) and a cross-national comparative study (comparing Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom). The countries under study cover all major regions of Europe and also include a non-European industrialised country, Australia. Some of these studies focus on moving after union dissolution and investigate the role of socioeconomic factors (e.g., gender, level of education, parenthood) in the levels of postseparation residential

moves. Other studies focus on housing tenure and homeownership following separation.

The studies contribute to the literature on residential relocations and housing after separation in several ways. First, all papers focus on residential relocations and housing following union dissolution, comparing separated individuals' experiences to that of single, cohabiting, and married individuals. Second, all studies use high quality longitudinal data and a range of methods (logistic regression, event history analysis, and sequence analysis) to study the link between separation or divorce, and residential relocations or housing changes. Third, the studies investigate the link between union dissolution and residential relocations in European countries with different welfare systems and housing markets. Previous studies have mainly analysed Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom; much less evidence is available on countries such as Belgium, Italy, Finland, France, or Hungary.

**Murinkó (2019)** studies the housing consequences of divorce and separation in the 'super homeownership' regime of Hungary, where in 2011 over 90% of the housing stock was officially owner occupied (Pittini et al. 2015). The real size of the private renting sector is unknown as people do not report when they let their homes due to the widespread practice of tax evasion (Hegedűs, Horváth, and Tosics 2014). Using data from waves 3 and 4 (2008–2012) of the Hungarian Generations and Gender Survey, this study analyses the probability of moving and of moving to homeownership, the parental home, or private renting and other tenure types after separation. The author pays special attention to differences between previously married and cohabiting separated couples, socioeconomic differences, and the importance of the parental home both as an origin and destination dwelling. In Hungary, coresidence with parents is more common than in Western and Northern Europe, even among young couples. The study finds that separated people are more likely to move than those who are single or are in a relationship. Moving is more common after divorce than separation from cohabitation, except for divorcees who lived in the parental home at the time of separation. Men are more likely to move back to the parental home than women and moving back to the parental home is more likely after divorce than following separation from cohabitation. The likelihood of owning a home is lower following divorce than among intact couples, and this relationship is especially strong among men. Additionally, both high and low socioeconomic status are associated with an increased likelihood of moving after union dissolution.

**Fiori (2019)** focuses on the gender differences in moving out of the joint home upon separation in Italy, where union dissolution levels have only recently increased and where women's economic and labour market prospects compared to men's are more limited than in other countries. The study covers couples who experienced the dissolution of their cohabiting or marital union between 2005 and 2014, a period

characterised by legislative changes, persistent gender inequalities, and weak welfare support. Using data from the European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), this study investigates whether the male or female partner is more likely to move out of the joint home following separation and whether and how household and contextual characteristics are associated with these outcomes. The author finds that overall women are more likely to stay in the joint home following separation than men. However, women are more likely to move out if the man owns or rents the joint home, if he is older, and if the couple has no joint children. Any differences between men's and women's propensity to move out of the joint home following separation by the educational or employment composition of the ex-couple are small and remain within the margin of error. Additionally, women who separated after 2010 and who lived in less densely populated areas were found to be more likely to leave the family home following separation than other women.

**Mikolai and Kulu (2019)** study housing tenure trajectories of separated men and women in Britain, a country where mortgages are widespread and relatively accessible, and the rental market consists of privately and socially rented dwellings. In Britain, homeownership is the norm especially for married couples and families with children and it represents tenure security and housing quality. The authors apply sequence analysis to data from the British Household Panel Survey (1991–2008). They use time since separation as the 'clock' for sequence analysis and follow separated individuals' housing tenure trajectories for five years after separation. Combining information on housing tenure and the order of residential moves, they identify five types of housing trajectories: 'owner stayers,' 'owner movers,' 'social rent stayers,' 'social rent movers,' and 'private renters.' They find differences in postseparation housing trajectories by socioeconomic characteristics. Men and highly educated individuals tend to stay in homeownership whereas women tend to stay in social housing. Those with lower levels of education either stay in or move to social housing. Additionally, those who separated from cohabitation and who had at least once child at the time of separation are more likely to stay in social renting than to remain homeowners. Furthermore, those who had at least one child at the time of separation are more likely to stay in than to move out of homeownership. The study discusses challenges of applying sequence analysis to panel data and examines the sensitivity of the results to attrition, the length of the observation window, and the choice of the classification criteria used in sequence analysis.

**Jalovaara and Kulu (2019)** investigate homeownership levels following separation in Finland, a Nordic country with relatively high divorce levels. Characteristic to Finland is an 'easy' homeownership regime (Mulder and Billari 2010) where mortgages are easily available, homeownership rates are high, and the rental sector is well developed. The authors use longitudinal Finnish register data (1988–2009), which are immune to attrition and nonresponse, and provide a large sample for

conducting detailed analysis on the short- and long-term influence of separation on homeownership levels. They distinguish separated individuals by time since separation and study homeownership levels up to 10 years following separation. The authors found low homeownership levels among recently separated individuals. As time since separation increases, the probability of being a homeowner increases. However, this increase is entirely due to improvements in housing conditions of repartnered people. By contrast, separated individuals have persistently low levels of homeownership. There are few differences between the homeownership levels of separated women and men, although they are somewhat lower among women than men. Relatively small differences are expected in a gender egalitarian context.

**Ferrari, Bonnet, and Solaz (2019)** investigate residential moves after divorce in France, a country with high rates of union dissolution and a housing market where access to mortgages is constrained. Hence, next to homeownership, private renting is also an acceptable and necessary housing tenure (Mulder and Billari 2010) and social renting is available for those in need. Using data from the French Permanent Demographic Sample (2010–2013), the authors analyse the likelihood and distance of a move and changes in housing conditions during one year following divorce or the dissolution of a civil union (also called PACS, which is an abbreviation for ‘pacte civil de solidarité’). They pay special attention to the role of parenthood status and child custody arrangements and whether the influence of these arrangements might be gendered. Although shared custody is becoming more common across Europe, previous studies have not analysed the role of child custody arrangements in individuals’ postseparation residential moves and housing. In France, physical child custody is most often assigned to the mother, shared custody is granted in about one-fifth of the cases and fathers have sole custody in about 6% of the cases. The authors show that women are more likely than men to move after separation but they find differences by parenthood and custodial status. Fathers are more likely to move out of the joint home than childless men, but mothers are less likely to do so than childless women. Additionally, the parent who has sole custody is less likely to move than the other parent. Among ex-couples who have shared custody arrangements, fathers are much less likely to move than mothers. Regarding the distance of these moves, parents move shorter distances than childless individuals and shared custody arrangements limit moving distances. Regarding housing conditions after divorce, they find that the decline in housing conditions is most pronounced for mothers and for custodial parents.

**Schnor and Mikolai (2020)** study mothers’ postseparation location continuity in Belgium; this concept refers to separated mothers’ ability to stay in or return to their preseparation neighbourhood. The authors distinguish between high, moderate, and low degrees of location continuity and study whether and how separated mothers’ degree of location continuity depends on mothers’ socioeconomic characteristics, the

characteristics of the place where they lived prior to separation, the characteristics of the ex-couple, and whether separated mothers repartner. Additionally, they study whether and how these characteristics influence separated mothers' propensity to return to their preseparation municipality. Belgium is characterised by high levels of union dissolution and an inflexible housing market, which can make it difficult for separated mothers to find a new place of residence. Using (multinomial) logistic regressions on linked data from the Belgian Census (2001) and Population Register (2001–2006), this study finds that mothers' socioeconomic position and local ties play an important role in their degree of postseparation location continuity. Local ties (living in the municipality or province of birth and living in social housing) and socioeconomic resources (education) predict high location continuity. Separated mothers' advantageous bargaining position in the ex-couple (married, more educated and older than their ex-partner) is also linked to a higher degree of location continuity. By contrast, women with a greater than average number of children and whose youngest child is older are less likely to experience a high degree of location continuity. Regarding separated mothers' propensity to return to the preseparation municipality, they find that those who have four or more children and whose youngest child is older are most likely to return to the preseparation municipality.

**Mikolai et al. (2019)** compare the tenure type (homeownership, social renting, private renting, and other tenure type) of the dwelling individuals move to following separation in four industrialised countries (Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom). The authors use Poisson regression on aggregated occurrence-exposure data from high quality national longitudinal datasets (the Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics in Australia, the German Socio-Economic Panel, the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study, and the British Household Panel Survey). They find striking similarities in postseparation residential moves and housing outcomes across the study countries despite differences in their housing markets and welfare systems. Separated individuals are more likely to experience a residential move than partnered people across all study countries and they tend to move to rental dwellings rather than to homeownership. In countries where the data allow the authors to distinguish between private and social renting, moving to private renting is the most common outcome following separation. The authors also explore differences in postseparation housing by socioeconomic status (measured by level of education) and whether individuals have children or not. These are two factors that are likely to play an important role in postseparation housing outcomes. They find interesting tendencies by educational level; low-educated individuals tend to move to social renting whereas those with high levels of education tend to move to homeownership. Furthermore, separated parents are more likely to move to rental dwellings than those who are childless except in the United Kingdom, where childless people tend to move to private renting following separation.

#### **4. Discussion and opportunities for future research**

The papers in this Special Collection have focused on residential relocations and housing patterns following separation across industrialised countries using high quality and detailed longitudinal datasets and longitudinal methods. The studies fill several important gaps in the literature. They provide the first analyses of the residential and housing consequences of divorce for an Eastern European (Hungary by Murinkó 2019) as well as a Southern European country (Italy by Fiori 2019). The papers focus on the role of repartnering (Jalovaara and Kulu 2019; Schnor and Mikolai 2020), child custody arrangements (Ferrari, Bonnet, and Solaz 2019), the parental home (Murinkó 2019), location continuity (Schnor and Mikolai 2020), country context (Mikolai et al. 2019), and gender (all studies) for postseparation residential outcomes and trajectories (Mikolai and Kulu 2019).

Although the study countries differ substantially regarding their welfare systems and housing markets, the analyses show that housing patterns and trajectories among separated people are relatively similar across countries. Divorce and separation have a negative impact on individuals' residential and housing conditions, which may last for years. Women are generally worse off than men and the negative effects are pronounced for individuals with low socioeconomic status. The observed patterns highlight existing social inequalities in European welfare states.

Several opportunities and challenges remain for future research. First, most previous studies on the interrelationship between family life events and residential relocations have not explicitly analysed couples. However, decisions regarding residential moves and housing are likely to be made by the couple rather than separately by the partners. Most studies have focused on women and men separately although data on couples are often available. Studies that have analysed couples tend to only investigate events in one life domain. For example, Thomas et al. (2017; 2018) analysed ex-partners' residential experiences following separation. Theunis, Eeckhaut, and van Bavel (2018) studied the influence of partners' absolute and relative education on their propensity to move out of the family home after union dissolution. Others have used the characteristics of the partner and/or the partners' characteristics relative to each other as a covariate in the analysis (e.g., Brandén and Haandrikman 2019; Michielin and Mulder 2008; Mulder and Wagner 2010; Mulder and Malmberg 2011; Mulder et al. 2012). Even though this approach provides some information on the role of partners' characteristics in the interrelationship between family life events and residential relocations, it is not ideal for explicitly addressing such linkages. Future studies should explicitly address the link between partners' interrelated family lives and residential relocations to better understand the mechanisms underlying the decisions couples make.



Second, further analysis of housing patterns and trajectories among separated individuals are needed by population subgroups to detect social inequalities and measure policy effects. For example, housing inequalities among immigrants and ethnic minorities following separation have been little (if at all) investigated. Although many migrant populations in Europe have low separation and divorce rates, some have high, especially individuals who are in ethnically mixed relationships (Milewski and Kulu 2014). Separated minority groups, especially so-called visible minorities (e.g., Black population in Europe) may face additional challenges in finding appropriate housing after separation because of discrimination. The effect of disruptive life events may thus be exacerbated among migrant and ethnic minority populations, particularly among migrant women who often have a weaker attachment to the labour market than native women.

Third, future research should explicitly investigate and identify the role of selection and causality in the relationship between family life events and residential moves. This is a complicated issue because many life transitions occur simultaneously, implying that it is not straightforward to determine which event is the trigger of other events. Some studies have analysed residential moves or the transition to homeownership before and after marriage (Holland 2012; Mulder and Wagner 1993, 1998). Other studies have modelled such interrelated processes jointly using simultaneous event history analyses. They have analysed the interrelated processes of union dissolution and residential moves (Mikolai and Kulu 2018a, 2018b), marriage and migration (Jang, Casterline, and Snyder 2014), or conceptions/births and residential moves (Kulu 2008; Kulu and Steele 2013). Investigating more than two interrelated processes is a fruitful avenue for future research.

Fourth, previous research has not analysed the role of nonresidential relationships in individuals' residential and housing experiences. In demographic studies, coresidence is normally taken to indicate the start of a relationship, but the assumption that the relationship starts at coresidence is almost never correct (Mulder 2013). Only a handful of studies have analysed so-called living-apart-together (LAT) relationships. For example, research has analysed the correlates of whether LAT relationships will become cohabiting couples or end in separation in Germany (Krapf 2018; Schnor 2015; Wagner et al. 2019) or the different dimensions of commitment in LAT relationships in the Netherlands (van der Wiel, Mulder, and Bailey 2018). However, these studies did not analyse the link between transitions among LAT couples and residential relocations or housing. An additional problem is that data on the start and end dates of non-coresidential relationships are not routinely collected in longitudinal studies, but they should be.

Last, the housing and relocation decisions of separated individuals are not just related to the characteristics of the individuals and their ex-partners, but also their

resident and nonresident children, new partners and their children (Mulder 2018). Future research should take this family complexity into account.

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